



TriYoga® Center of Philadelphia at Mind-Body Services

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GRATITUDE AND SELFLESS SERVICE BY CHRISTINE (CITRINĪ) WARE, Ph.D., E-RYT

Thanksgiving is often a time for reflection on the many things for which we are grateful, whether as simple and mysterious as our being alive, how each breath inspires our life (literally), how certain individuals come into our lives as teachers, companions, and guides, or how the seasons and nature continue to provide us with beauty and life.

Karma yoga, the practice of "selfless service," is a central branch of yoga. As we enter the Thanksgiving holiday, I am reminded of the many ways to serve, to support those who are less fortunate, and to honor all beings. Each of us has our own ways to express thanks and to serve. In the hopes that it inspires, I'd like to share with you a few ways that I practice karma yoga.

As an avid vegetable gardener, I and my family have been involved for some time in growing food for others. We have donated from our own garden's abundance and helped with plots devoted to growing food for a local food pantry. It can be difficult for food pantry recipients to obtain locally-grown, organic, fresh, and unprocessed food. Since it is healthier for each of us and for our planet to eat locally-grown and organically produced food that is lower on the food chain, we have tried to support these dietary choices for ourselves and for others through the blessings that the earth, sun, and rain bestow on us.

As a psychologist, I also encounter clients who have financial difficulties obtaining mental health services. I regularly provide some pro bono (from the Latin "for the public good") and reduced fee services for clients.

Yoga teachings are, of course, priceless. The TriYoga Center of Philadelphia is also a labor of love for me. It simply grew out of a strong desire to have a TriYoga hOMe, where I and others could teach, allowing others to gain from the practices that have so transformed my life. At the TriYoga Center of Philadelphia, we used to offer all classes according to seva, meaning "offering" or "service for the benefit of others." Although we made some changes to our tuition structure in 2011, we have continued this donation-based practice in our monthly Friday evening Full Moon Trinity classes. I also extend seva opportunities to committed, regular students who, for whatever reason, have difficulties with our tuition structure for I do not want finances to be the primary obstacle to a willing and devoted student pursuing yoga practice. I speak for all of the TriYoga teachers in saying that we continue to be extremely grateful for our students' generosity and support.

I feel truly grateful and honored to be able to offer all of this. I hope that my service to others provides and reflects a fraction of the benefit and support that I have received along my journey. As we prepare to enjoy Thanksgiving feasts and time with friends and family, let me once again share a prayer that I love from the Vietnamese Buddhist monk, Thich Nhat Hanh:

*This food is the gift of the whole universe — the Earth, the sky, and much hard work.
May we eat in mindfulness so as to be worthy to receive it.
May we transform our unskilled states of mind and learn to eat with moderation.
May we take only foods that nourish us and prevent illness.
We accept this food to realize the path of understanding and love.*

- The Five Contemplation from Plum Village (Thich Nhat Hanh, 2000)

May we all continue to prosper, be healthy, feel joy, and expand into peace. May we support others to prosper, be healthy, feel joy, and expand into peace. May we each find our own ways to serve, in gratitude for all that we have been given. ~ Thank you ~

~ Namaste ~



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